

Nehemiah Chapter 11

Reading: Psalm 145

- All the people had gathered at Jerusalem to re-dedicate their lives to the Lord, to sanctify themselves to the keeping of the law - but they didn't all live there.
- The Temple had been re-built, the walls had been completed, but the city itself still pretty much lie in ruins and it was difficult and challenging to live there.
- Somebody once noted that God made the first garden, but it was man who built the first city.
- In the ancient world cities were places of wealth and power. In our modern times, during the industrial revolution that was the case here, a source of power. Now our cities are known more for corruption and poverty.
- Nehemiah recognized back then that the nation of Israel could never be strong as long as Jerusalem was weak. Jerusalem could not be strong unless the people were willing to sacrifice of themselves and work hard.

V: 1-2 The leaders lived in Jerusalem, that was a given. But after that they cast lots to draft more citizen to live there. 10% would live in Jerusalem, the remaining 90% would live outside the city - which seemed to be preferable.

- This is almost like a tithe of the people...
- Those that volunteered were blessed.
- Those that responded voluntarily, sacrificially - were doing pretty much what Paul described later in the book of Romans.

Romans 12:1 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

- The first repatriation of Israelites during the reign of Cyrus was only 49,000 out of the 3-4 million Jews living in Babylon. It was only a very small percentage that were willing to endure the trip there and the hardships that awaited on the other end. But they were motivated by the Holy Spirit to once again re-build Jerusalem.
- Now only a small percentage of that group were actually living in Jerusalem, most had gone to the cities and villages of Judah, country living so to speak.

Matthew 7:13-14 “¹³Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

V: 3 The focus is upon those that lived in Jerusalem, but when it comes to the rest of Judea our text describes the rest of “Israel” as being those that inhabited the land.

- Meaning the “lost tribes” are found, representatives of all the tribes of “Israel” were present.
- It seems like Nehemiah really likes to list the people who are involved in various activities through this book.

V: 4-9 Describes the children of Judah who dwelt in Jerusalem adding up to 468, and the sons of Benjamin totaling 928.

V: 10-19 Covering the priests, the leaders, mighty men of valor, the Levites, and the porters / gate keepers.

- God had set aside special cities for the priests, Levites, and Temple workers, so they could have legitimately lived outside Jerusalem; but they chose to be with the people as they served God in the Temple.
- So often when God is doing a work in our lives He takes us out of our comfort zone to a place of greater dependance on Him.

V: 20 The remainder of “Israel” - meaning the 12 tribes were spread out over all the cities and villages of Judah in their respective places.

V: 21 The “Nethinims” - meaning the Temple servants, conquered peoples from Joshua up to Solomon’s time - they dwelt in Ophel - meaning in Jerusalem in what today would be called the Old City.

- The Nethinims were located near the source of water since they would be carrying water, and near to where they could carry wood - both for the service of the Temple.



V: 22-24 Describes those Levites that were in charge of worship.

- “²³For it was the king’s commandment...” - which king? David or Artaxerxes? Yes, both - but here he’s speaking specifically of the king’s representative in Jerusalem.

Ezra 6:8-10 “⁸Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king’s goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.” - “¹⁰That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savors unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.”

Ezra 7:20-24 same thing.

- Artaxerxes had a vested interest.
- We are called to pray for our leaders as well:

1 Timothy 2:1-2 “¹I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; ²for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

V: 25-30 ([Map](#)) Describing 18 cities that stretch from Beer-Sheba in the South up to the Valley of Hinnom which is just on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

V: 31-36 Describing 15 cities somewhat North of Jerusalem in Benjamin.

- Indicating that the Levites were spread out between these two areas.
- Those who chose to dwell in Jerusalem are named, those who didn’t aren’t listed, only the names of the cities.
- Those that choose to abide in Christ are named in the Lamb’s book of life, those that do not, are not listed.

Nehemiah Chapter 12

V: 1-26 Listing those priests and the Levites who had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Joshua approximately ninety years earlier and whose families were still in the region.

V: 27-43 They are going to dedicate the walls of Jerusalem - so they seek out all the Levites who will compose the choir on the walls.

Diagram



- The Jews were accustomed to having workers and watchers on the walls of Jerusalem, but now Nehemiah and Ezra assigned people to be worshipers on the walls - who were so enthusiastic that they could be heard even afar off.
- They are divided up into two groups with Ezra & Nehemiah each leading one of the perspective groups.
- They started out marching in opposite directions on top of the walls, then meet together near the Temple. They are playing music and praising the Lord as they go.
- The service / celebration climaxes with the sacrifices offered to the Lord.
- They could have just stayed in the Temple area and had a grand old time.
- First off: it was the walls that were being dedicated.
- Secondly by marching on the walls they are being observed by the non-believers outside the walls.
- The people were bearing witness to the watching world that God had done a great work, and that He alone would be glorified.
- Their enemies had said that the walls would be so weak that a fox could knock them down (Nehemiah 4:3) but here they are marching on the walls praising God!
- This was all a testimony to the unbelieving Gentiles of the power of God and the reality of faith.
- This was also a symbolic act on their parts: They were taking ownership.

Genesis 13:17 “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”

Joshua 1:3 “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”

- This was their way of saying “we claim all that our God has for us!”

V: 44-47 While there is reason to celebrate, there is still work to be done.

- Some are appointed to keep track of the various offerings, receiving and storing the first fruits, tithes, and offerings.

- They purified themselves and were ordered according to that which David and Solomon had previously ordained.
- All Israel in the times of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah supported those who were ministering and worshipping in the house of the Lord.
- Dedicating the walls was definitely a marvelous event, but it should not just have been a one time event - we should march about the walls continually offering praise and thanks to God, continually giving Him glory - not just so the world can see - but because He is worthy!

Hebrews 13:15 “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”

- The people offered their praise thankfully: 24, 27, 31, 38, 46.
- They offered their praise joyfully: 27, 43, 44
- And they offered it loudly: 42-43
- It was not a time for muted or subdued worship, it was a time to worship the Lord enthusiastically.
- King David had been dead for 500 years, yet he is mentioned 5 times in this chapter.
- David organized the priests and wrote many of the songs for the temple singers. David served his generation faithfully, and in doing so he served every generation that followed.
- All of this praise and worship originated previously with the hearing of the Word of God at the water gate. The learning of God’s Word and the Worship of God go hand in hand.

Colossians 3:16 “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Psalms 145:1 “I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.”